

1949-2009

Phoenix soars on dragon's trail

Evolution of New China's image



China's image in the modern era was, in fact, shaped by Westerners. This can be traced back 700 years, when Italian explorer Marco Polo introduced this mysterious faraway land to his countrymen and then to other Westerners.

It was not until the mid-1990s, almost two decades after New China instituted economic reforms and opened up to the world, that the country began to ponder its international image. The Chinese government realized the importance of effective communication with world powers, led by the US. Hence, the government fine-tuned its working style and think tanks were established to study how China could protect its image. These developments were documented by journalists, novelists and filmmakers.

In this special issue for the PRC's 60th anniversary, *Beijing Today* speaks to Chinese and Western experts about China's past and future – how the country can improve its image and relations with the West, the challenges it faces as a world power, and the government's accomplishments and plans. We also look at changes in Chinese literature, film and foreign media over the past six decades.

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Breaking down the Great Invisible Wall

Milestones in China's growth through the eyes of a Western scholar



China has become one of the pillars of the global community. CFP Photo

Beijing Today (BT): What comes to mind when you think about the 60th anniversary of the Republic?

David Gosset (DG): Mainly three things. First, as Mao Zedong said 60 years ago, "China has stood up!"

Second, a tectonic shift. What one-fifth of mankind has accomplished in 60 years is extraordinary. The country has been transformed, modernized, and China is now a co-architect of the global system. It is extraordinary in the sense that nobody in 1949 could have anticipated its current situation. In 1949 our world was polarized between the US and the Soviet Union; today some analysts are talking about a G2 composed of the US and China. Although the G2 discourse is a great simplification, it is interesting if you take it as an indicator of a tectonic shift in global politics.

Third, unfortunately, a lack of understanding in the West of China's transformation. China has changed considerably, but Western perception of it does not really correspond to China's new realities.

Several days before the 60th anniversary celebration in Beijing, President Hu Jintao attended a series of United Nations meetings in New York (Summit on Climate Change, UN General Assembly and Security Council Summit on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament) and the Group of 20 financial summit in Pittsburgh. President Hu Jintao is not only a major personality in China but also a central figure in the global village.

BT: How would you describe the past six decades in the country's history?

DG: China is going through a renaissance that is having a considerable impact on world affairs. The renaissance did not begin in 1949 and has not yet culminated; this is an ongoing process – one of the most significant stories of our time. In my opinion, the country's renaissance is defined by at least three dynamics: its economic reemergence, its socio-political transformation and the reinterpretation by Chinese intellectuals of Chinese tradition.

BT: What events in the past 60 years do you consider the most decisive?

DG: On the relationship between China and the world, I would mention four major moments. First, 45 years ago – (French President Charles) de Gaulle's recognition of the People's Republic that ended the country's relative isolation. For de Gaulle, China was not only a nation or a nation-state but

By Venus Lee

David Gosset, founder of the Euro-China Forum and director of China Europe International Business School's Euro-China Center for International and Business Relations, has dedicated the past decade of his career to helping Westerners better understand the real China. *Beijing Today* invited him to share a scholar's perspective on the milestones the country has reached since the founding of the People's Republic.



more fundamentally a civilization, a "very unique and very deep civilization," as he said in a famous press conference in 1964.

Second, the Richard Nixon/Henry Kissinger and Mao/Zhou Enlai strategic synergies that modified the global strategic configuration. Third, of course, Deng's opening up in 1978 – what I call China's third revolution (after 1911 and 1949). Fourth, Hong Kong and Macau's retrocessions as symbols of the end of the "unequal treaties."

new historical conditions and the magnitude of the shift induced by China's return to centrality is a source of perplexity.

Over the past 30 years, 500 million Chinese citizens have been lifted out of poverty. Despite the country's social, economic, political and geopolitical challenges – proportionate to its size and diversity – one cannot deny the overall progress accomplished by one-fifth of mankind.

One should acknowledge Beijing's achievements, welcome a reliable partner

"On the road toward comprehension and cooperation between China and the West stands a serious obstacle: an invisible wall of mistrust, ignorance and fear."

BT: You earlier said "China has changed considerably, but Western perception of China does not correspond to China's new realities." What is your analysis of China's image in the West?

DG: The highly influential *Economist* published on September 3, 2009 an article with the following title: "The People's Republic at 60: A harmonious and stable crack-down. China celebrates a milestone with a new round of repression." Such headlines encapsulate counterproductive Western sarcasm, imperceptiveness and ignorance.

On the road toward comprehension and cooperation between China and the West stands a serious obstacle: an invisible wall of mistrust, ignorance and fear. For a long time, the Great Wall had been the symbol of an isolated and declining empire whose elites were incapable of adjusting to change. Today, the Great Invisible Wall could refer to the West's inability to fully appreciate the extent of China's transformation and how it is rearranging the 21st century distribution of power. For me, the discrepancy between the paucity of Western responsiveness to

and rejoice in a promising future. However, one often suspects China's intentions, succumbs to sarcastic China-bashing and even conceives maneuvers to contain China's reemergence.

The US has just released its "National Intelligence Strategy" (in August 2009). In this report, it is said that a number of nation-states have the ability to challenge US interests. The report named China along with Iran, North Korea and Russia.

Some data indicate that China's image in the West is deteriorating. In a 2006 survey done by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 34 percent of Americans considered China as a minor threat and 47 percent as a major threat. In the 2008 Pew Global Attitudes Project, 72 percent of the French and 68 percent of the Germans had an unfavorable opinion of China. Just before the Beijing Olympics, the same institute asked the Chinese people whether they were satisfied with their country's evolution; 86 percent said yes, while it was 48 percent in 2002. The contrast between the two is striking.

Mutual empathy is essential to prevent a vicious cycle of incomprehension and exclu-

sion. Chinese intellectuals have to accept that the West's opening up and adjustment to the Chinese renaissance will be a long process, while Western elites have to understand the imbalance in the economic development between the eastern and western parts of China, and that its socio-political modernization requires time.

Both sides, whatever the difficulties, have to cultivate the highest sense of responsibility and approach issues from a global perspective. Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925), the father of modern China, said one year before his death, "Europeans cannot yet fathom our ancient civilization, but 2,000 years ago, China already conceived of a political world civilization, and cosmopolitanism was already discussed."

If adequately understood and combined, Western universalism and Chinese cosmopolitanism are powerful enough to free ourselves from any visible or invisible barrier, to enlarge our political horizon and to take us to another level of awareness.

BT: What do you think of the Chinese media's influence on the world?

DG: China's communication with the rest of the world is a factor that can bridge the understanding gap. In the long term, transparency and access, including in Tibet and in Xinjiang, will help the Western public become more familiar with the Chinese world and its leadership's real intentions. Press conferences, public fora, international events, the participation of Chinese intellectuals in debates over global policies and the development of sophisticated media coexisting worldwide with Western news networks will expose the myth of an impenetrable and secretive China. But it takes time to build global media networks capable of shaping or reshaping debates.

Our world needs to hear the voice of China's intellectuals. And it will. China as a political entity has stood up. It is already a pillar of the global economic and financial systems; now it has to speak up, inspired by the depth of its ancient civilization, to serve world equilibrium and harmony.

The country is going through a renaissance but it has not yet reached its "Golden Age" in the 21st century. But I remain convinced that what China was able to achieve during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), for example, will be repeated – China as an open matrix of civilization in constant constructive interaction with the world around her.

Confronting centuries-old misconceptions

Formation of China's image is planted in Western values



Chinese students protest Western media's negative reports on China in the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics.
Photo provided by Feng Niao

Beijing Today (BT): How would you characterize China's image in the West in the past decade?

Zhou Ning (ZN): The perception of the China Threat has lingered on in the past decade. Thirty-one years after instituting economic reforms and opening up to the world, China has quickly become one of the strongest economic powers in the Asia-Pacific region. Hundreds of millions of Chinese people have been lifted out of poverty, the market economy has considerably changed the country's culture and political environment, and the younger generation is planning its future, which could not have happened 30 years ago. China also exerts positive influence on the world stage. It is a pity, however, that its image has not kept up with the changes happening within it. The country is still an object of misunderstanding and suspicion in the West.

In 1993 in particular, when Nicholas D. Kristof, a journalist at the New York Times, suggested in a column the concept of Chinese hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region, it triggered overnight the discussion of the China Threat in the Western world. Before that, China had been viewed in the West as a "middle power." The China Threat theory reached its height at the turn of the century and many in the West still subscribe to it because these people fail to look objectively at China's reality.

The country has maintained an almost 10-percent GDP growth in the past decade. Such rapid development has triggered Westerners' emotional insecurity because they are unsure of China's goals.

Westerners see China's pattern of development as distinct from that of Europe, US and East Asia. They think China's political system is incongruent with its economic system. The standards they use to evaluate the country are still based on Western ideologies; since the Industrial Revolution, the world order has been established on Western values based on capitalism, democracy and Christianity. The West will feel safe only if China's growth runs in accordance with these values.

A weakness of China's power in global decision-making has also aggravated misunderstandings. Why doesn't anybody say

By Venus Lee

Zhou Ning, Dean of Xiamen University's College of Art, has been studying the West's perception of China for almost two decades, through literary works, films and news reports. He explained the convoluted changes in the West's image of China in a dialogue with *Beijing Today*.



the US is a threat to the world when it has launched wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in the guise of fighting terrorism? But why does China – a non-aggressive country whose people have cherished peace and stability through the ages – become the victim of such an accusation? This is because legitimacy for world powers rests on Western criteria. It is obvious Western countries enjoy privileges in the current world order.

The West's image of China is not determined by reality but Western cultural tradition, so it is necessary for the Chinese people to study how the country was perceived by Westerners in the past.

BT: What have been the changes in the West's image of China throughout history?

ZN: Records of the West's image of China can be traced back to 13th century. Marco Polo's book *Travels* portrayed a prosperous and mighty China governed by Kublai Khan (1215-1294), who was wise, just, kind and generous. Marco Polo's *Travels* was popular during his time and influenced Europeans' image of China for several centuries.

In the 20th century, the US became one of the most important Western countries that shaped China's image in the West. Most Americans thought of China

as a quaint, backward, somewhat ridiculous society, and the Chinese people were regarded as dangerous, evil, vicious and possessing a mysterious power to corrupt the West.

China's image swung between good and evil four times in the 20th century.

"The West's image of China is never a representation of the reality of China – it is a kind of discourse planted in Western culture in certain countries and certain periods of history – no right or wrong, no true or false."

Westerners' anger at the "yellow peril" (jobs in the West going to Chinese migrants because of their cheap labor) reached its peak in the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. It was a shock to the West and it strengthened the notion that the Chinese people were dangerous and violent.

With the collapse of the last Chinese dynasty in 1911 and the chaos that followed, the US felt it was the "white man's burden" to help China establish a democratic government based on the Western model.

American discourse on China in the second half of the 20th century centered on several themes. The first one was on the Communist government that

was portrayed as totalitarian and repressive. It was linked to the idea that Chinese society was not governed by rules and laws but ruled by terror. In addition, in the broad context of the Cold War, Communist China was viewed as a threat to the West. This was confirmed by the encounter between China and the US in the Korean War (1950-1953) and by the

series of political and cultural revolutions that took place in China. The Cultural Revolution solidified the image of China as hell in the eyes of Westerners.

At the beginning of the last quarter of the 20th century, the country recovered its positive image as news of Chinese reform reached the West, but it did not last long; China's image again suffered in the early 1990s due to internal issues. These complicated changes in the country's image show Western ambivalence toward China.

So the West's image of China is never a representation of the reality of China – it is a kind of discourse planted in Western culture in certain countries and certain periods of history – no right or wrong, no true or false.

BT: What obstacles remain before the world truly knows the real China?

ZN: Prejudices and fears still dominate Westerners' view of China, so the country has to make a bigger effort to introduce the real China to the world. It is very important for China to study and change Westerners' habitual ways of thinking about it if it wants to improve its image.

Self-improvement also matters. The country's image is not only a matter of how it is perceived in the West but also how Chinese people exhibit political maturity and cultural consciousness.

It is important that China keeps a positive and open attitude to studying advances in Western countries because it is a member of the world community and its modernization goes hand in hand with multilateral cooperation and exchanges.

Chinese people are still not confident about their own culture, which is also an obstacle to constructing a realistic image of China in the West. Chinese people still seek approval from Westerners; when Westerners say something is good, the Chinese people immediately agree. They should seek the truth based on facts and not be dictated by Western beliefs.

Lastly, to be a mature world power, the country should be more tolerant of its skewed image in the West. An overly emotional response to Westerners' prejudice may create worries about the brand of Chinese nationalism.

Gov's role in shaping China's image

By Huang Daohen

As a major mover of the global economy, China carefully safeguards its image overseas. Several government bodies, including the ministries of foreign affairs and culture, the State Council Information Office and the International Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC), are involved in regulating the flow of information in and out of the country.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs From rebel to rebuild



Wu Jianmin

Born in Chongqing in 1939, Wu obtained a bachelor's degree in French and a postgraduate degree in translation and interpretation from the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute. Wu's career as a diplomat included postings as ambassador to France and the United Nations.

By Wang Yu

China has made huge strides in the past 60 years, including burnishing its international image after some dark moments in its history.

Wu Jianmin, former Chinese ambassador to France and honorary president of the International Exhibitions Bureau, witnessed the development of the country's diplomacy in a 44-year career in the foreign service that began in 1959. The 70-year-old former diplomat talked to *Beijing Today* about the shift in China's image from "rebel" to "benefactor" following economic reforms in 1978. For the first time in its history, Wu said, the country has become a rebuild of the international order.

Struggle to survive in isolation

For the first few decades after its founding, the People's Republic faced not only internal problems like poverty and famine but also an embargo by Western countries, including the US.

In the late 1950s, China's once solid relationship with the Soviet Union soured due to several factors, including the Soviet's invasion of Hungary, which went against China's foreign policy of non-interference. A decade later, troops from both sides clashed in three incidents in March 1969.

These were also the early years of Wu's career in the diplomatic corps.

"There were only 18 countries that had diplomatic relations with us at the time. China's reputation on the world stage was that of a rebel, and most countries held a hostile attitude toward us," Wu said.

"In my opinion, before China reopened its doors to the world in 1978, the most important mission for the foreign ministry was to help the country survive in such a grave environment," he said.

Reaching out to the global community

October 25, 1971, was the day the country made a breakthrough in international diplomacy. China regained its seat in the United Nations, formerly held by Taiwan following the civil war in 1949. Wu and his wife, Shi Yanhua, became two of the first staff members of China's UN office in New York.

Seven months earlier, the Chinese government already sensed the changing tides. On April 6, the US national table tennis team was in Japan for the 31st World Table Tennis Championships when



American George Brathwaite (left) returning a shot to China's Liang Geliang at the United Nations in New York in celebration of the 25th anniversary of "Ping Pong Diplomacy."

IC Photos

their Chinese counterparts invited them to visit China. Four days later, the American athletes, accompanied by journalists, became the first US citizens to set foot in Beijing since the Communist Party came to power in 1949.

This development is now referred to as Ping-Pong Diplomacy, marking a thaw in US-China relations. In January 1979, the two nations reestablished diplomatic ties, a cooperation that has progressed far beyond the imagination of even the most optimistic people at the time.

Ten years later, Sino-Soviet relations normalized; the following year, total trade volume between the two sides hit \$4.2 billion (28.7 billion yuan in current rates). In addition, China strengthened its ties with Japan and European countries.

"China's image has been transformed into a benefactor's," Wu, who considers his 10 years in the UN some of the most precious in his career, said. "It is true economic reforms gave us the opportunity to boom in the 1990s, but you cannot make progress if the world is against you. It was time to make as many friends as you could."

Extending the sphere of influence

In early 1996, when Wu had been ambassador to the Netherlands for only a year, he was appointed ambassador to the UN office in Geneva by then-president Jiang Zemin.

On April 23 that year, the UN Commission on Human Rights discussed com-

plaints regarding human rights in China. Wu made a brilliant speech that resulted in the committee choosing not to take action against the country.

"There are still small conflicts, but the situation has changed. The world needs China," Wu said.

After the country's economic boom, it embraced more avenues for diplomacy; besides politics, its dealings with other countries now encompass sports, education, culture and technology.

The country's diplomats are not its only ambassadors. According to a government policy, ordinary citizens, especially the 12 million who travel overseas yearly, also play the role.

In 2004, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs created the Department of Public Diplomacy to introduce the art of diplomacy to the average Chinese and to encourage them to get involved.

The ministry's spokesmen have become celebrities, which shows citizens have become more concerned with diplomatic issues. "The government has also issued guidelines for Chinese tourists, especially on their manners, because they uphold the country's image," Wu said.

As a member of the global community's elite, China hopes to extend its sphere of influence. In the late 1990s, domestic scholars began to study the concept of "smart power," defined by Harvard professor Joseph Nye as "the ability to combine hard and soft power into a winning strategy."

"At first, the government was very cautious of the concept because it was developed by Joseph Nye after the collapse of the Soviet Union," Wu said. "However, as the country grows stronger, it is natural that it hopes to become influential."

On November 29, 2002, the government inaugurated the Chinese Culture Center in Paris, the country's first cultural agency in the West. Wu, who was ambassador to France at the time, said the center aims to introduce Chinese culture not only to Parisians but also to the city's tourists.

"China experienced the world's longest period of feudalism because of its culture, so it is also necessary for the PRC to create and recognize a new mainstream culture. After all, it is the first time we're playing the role of a rebuild in the international order," Wu said.

"It is a new challenge and problems such as stringent nationalism occur. Nevertheless, I think the government is calm enough to deal with these issues," he said.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Currently headed by Yang Jiechi, the ministry is an executive agency responsible for foreign relations between China and other countries.

The ministry formulates foreign policies, decisions, foreign affairs documents and statements involving China. It negotiates and signs bilateral and multilateral foreign treaties and agreements, as well as dispatches representatives to other countries.

International Department of CPC

The Party's role in securing a place for China on the world stage



Jiang Yao

Jiang, a professor and doctorate student supervisor in party theory and comparison, has been a member of the faculty at the Party School of the CPC Central Committee for 25 years. She studied in the former Soviet Union from 1988 to 1993.

By Zhao Hongyi

"We will continue to conduct exchanges and cooperation with all the political parties of other countries, on the basis of independence, equality, mutual respect and non-interference in the other's internal affairs," Hu Jintao, chairman of the Communist Party of China (CPC), stated at the 17th National Congress in October 2007.

New China's growth and reputation is entwined with that of the CPC, which the party knew from the beginning. Two years after the Republic's founding, the party created its International Department to handle external exchanges, observations and studies.

Beijing Today talked to experts, including Jiang Yao, professor of the CPC history at the Party School of the CPC Central Committee, about the evolution of the party's image.

1950s and 60s: Forging links with comrades

In the 1950s, the CPC focused on ridding the country of opposing forces and recovering from the devastation of the previous decade's civil war.

Externally, it worked on developing bilateral ties with communist Soviet Union and the socialist countries of Eastern Europe "because of the discrimination and embargo imposed by Western countries led by the United States," Ren Yuanze, a lecturer at China Foreign Affairs University, said.

China's relationship with the USSR hit rough patches when the latter invaded Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968; the CPC has always upheld non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, a guiding principle in China's international relations today.

In the 60s, the party formed ties with newly independent nations and Marxist countries in the Third World such as those in Africa and national parties in Latin America. The effort won China votes in the United Nations and catapulted it into the UN's five-member-state Security Council in the early 1970s.

The CPC moved on to set up alliances with more than 90 communist and nationalist parties, the leaders of whom include Fidel Castro (Cuba), Che Guevara



Chairman Mao Zedong and Nikita Khrushchev (right) at the fifth National Day celebrations in Beijing, 1954.

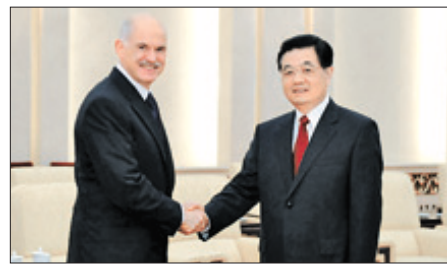
CFP Photo



Deng Xiaoping toasting with Georges Marchais, head of the Communist Party of France in Beijing, October 1982.



Jiang Zemin meeting Tsutomu Hata, former head of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party and senior advisor to the ruling Democratic Party.



Hu Jintao meeting the delegation led by President George Papandreu, former Greek Prime Minister and chairman of the Socialist International in May 2009. Photos provided by itcpc.com

(Argentina) and Ho Chi Minh (Vietnam).

1970s: contact with Western countries

The CPC sought to normalize relations with Western nations due

developing countries.

In the second half of the 70s, the first generation of CPC leaders, including Mao, passed away. The party went through a fierce power struggle, which led to changes in

"We will continue to conduct exchanges and cooperation with all the political parties of other countries, on the basis of independence, equality, mutual respect and non-interference in the other's internal affairs."

to the deterioration of bilateral relations with the Soviet Union, both on party and country relations. Major breakthroughs occurred in 1972, when US President Richard Nixon visited Beijing, and in 1979, when the US and the People's Republic set up diplomatic ties.

In the early 70s, the party reached out to political figures and parties in developed countries in North America and Europe. This resulted in Western politicians visiting China and later persuading their governments to recognize the PRC. China regained its seat in the UN in 1971.

It was also during this decade that the CPC and its then chairman, Mao Zedong, enjoyed unprecedented popularity, particularly in

the next decade.

Deng Xiaoping became the party's new top man. Known for his practicality, Deng's advice for taking China out of its slump was to "observe the world more and speak less."

1980s and 90s: transformation, abundance and diversification

In 1982, the CPC formed relations with other communist parties and nationalist parties on the basis of "independence, equality, mutual respect and non-interference in the other's internal affairs." It wanted to tap political forces beyond the world's communist and socialist parties; it was preparing to usher in a new era for the CPC.

In the late 80s, China instituted economic reforms; at the same time, the CPC reached out to many left-wing parties, such as the communist parties of Romania, Yugoslavia, Italy and countries in Latin America, Africa and Oceania; it also approached centrist and right-wing parties in developed countries, such as socialist parties, social-democratic parties and union parties in Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Greece and Austria.

Before the end of the Cold War in 1991, the CPC had forged ties with 270 political parties in more than 110 countries.

"This gave the CPC a friendly environment in which to continue its reforms," Ren, of China Foreign Affairs University, said.

In the new century, Chairman Hu Jintao started proposing "harmony in the world's political relations."

Throughout the CPC's history, its International Department has played the role of think tank and implementer of external policies.

"A political party's relations and contacts should serve the overall national foreign policy and fundamental interests of the country, and develop unique channels and friends to help solve the difficulties and problems foreign policies cannot solve. It's a supplement to the national foreign policy," Wang Jiarui, the department's director-

general, said.

George Karsinski, a senior researcher at the Eisenhower Foundation in Washington, DC, said the party has adjusted to changes around it over the decades. "But its top principle has not changed. That is, to better serve the country's interest."

Professor Jiang Yao of the Party School explains the party's role more succinctly: "It's part of the country's foreign policy, which focuses on economic development to give its people a better life."

International Department of CPC

Created in 1951, the department has continuously expanded its international exchanges and communications, serving one of the CPC's key tasks over the past half-century.

Since the country instituted economic reforms in 1978, the department has engaged in conducting new types of interparty exchanges and cooperation to promote state-to-state relations.

It also functions as a research institution on international studies, providing recommendations to the party's central committee for its foreign policy decisions.

State Council Information Office

Helping provide news to the world



Guo Weimin

Guo is the director of the State Council Information Office's press bureau, which produces the SCIO's press releases. Guo, known as the "godfather of the country's spokesmen," impressed the media with his press release on the Sichuan earthquake, which contained timely, accurate and objective answers.

By Huang Daohen

Since the Beijing Olympics, China-related news in the foreign media has increased exponentially, thanks in part to a larger pool of foreign correspondents in China, an increase in government-organized media trips locally, and most importantly, an improved legal framework governing foreign journalists' work in the country.

The State Council Information Office (SCIO), the government's chief news office, is the agency responsible for creating the new media rules, which came into effect on October 17, 2008, and provided more convenience and access to members of the foreign media.



The State Council Information Office is set up to help provide news on China to the rest of the world.

CFP Photos

On foreign media

New regulations offer more freedom

"Openness to the foreign media is a long-term policy," Guo Weimin, director of the State Council Information Office's press bureau, said. "We are encouraged to see an increasing number of reports by foreign journalists, which cover every aspect of our society."

Guo regarded media coverage on the riots in Urumqi, Xinjiang in July as an important test of the new reporting guidelines.

Half a day after calm returned to Urumqi, a press conference was held in the city. Later, all Beijing-based foreign journalists were invited to the area to conduct interviews.

The attitude of openness exhibited in this case reflects the changes in China's media policy and signals the creation of a more transparent reporting system, Guo said.

Previously, most local governments were afraid of negative reports and always tried to hide unsavory news from the media, Guo said. "But the fact is that the more you hide information, the more the media will want to know," the press bureau director said.

Sometimes, the media actually has no interest in the things you are trying to con-

ceal, Guo said, but the process of investigating excites reporters. Thus, the government updated its rules for the foreign media.

According to the new regulations, foreign journalists no longer need to be accompanied by a government representative when conducting interviews. The directive, which went into effect October 17 last year, was the first time the government removed such a restriction on foreign reporters.

The new legal framework gives foreign media wider access to stories. "China has followed up on its pledge to facilitate foreign media's work in China," Guo said. "They can do interviews as long as they get the permission of interviewees."

China created its first regulations concerning foreign media in 1990. Among the rules were that foreign journalists needed to obtain government permission before going on any reporting trip. And they often faced harassment when they covered sensitive issues.

"It's not easy to pass a new policy," Guo said. "It's an exhausting job to set up communication networks and issue clarifications down to the grassroots in a country as big as China."

Guo cited a few cases in which central and local government bodies made a tremendous effort to ensure the implementation of the new media rules.

A foreign journalist once called Guo's office from a village and complained that a local leader was preventing him from covering a story. "As soon as we received the call, we contacted the local government and enabled the journalist to accomplish his work,"

Guo said.

"Now, there are fewer complaints from the foreign media," he said.

The director, however, admitted that he still receives complaints from foreign journalists on subjects as varied as boring press conferences to disturbances in local interviews.

"The new regulations' full implementation needs close coordination among differ-

ent government bodies, and it takes time for local governments to fully understand their terms," he said.

Arranging interviews on-site

The SCIO also arranges interviews for foreign reporters. The office's assistance toward foreign journalists was evident in the wake of major emergencies in 2008, such as the snowstorms in southern China, the riots in Lhasa and the 8.0-magnitude earthquake in Sichuan.

"Our office, together with relevant departments of the central and local governments, promptly assisted foreign journalists conducting coverage on-site," Guo said.

On May 15 last year, three days after the Sichuan earthquake, SCIO began organizing reporting tours to the stricken areas for Chinese and foreign journalists. It was estimated that more than 800 foreign journalists visited Sichuan Province after the quake.

During the Beijing Games a few months later, at least 30,000 foreign journalists descended on China.

"We welcome overseas media people to do more reports on China – whether positive or negative – but you they have to see the situation firsthand," Guo said.

"Sometimes, the media actually have no interest in the things you are trying to conceal."

On Government

Zero refusals from spokesmen

Many central and local government units have now appointed spokespersons to quickly respond to journalists' inquiries.

The Foreign Affairs Ministry was the first to adopt the system. Later, it set up a 24-hour hotline to answer questions from foreign media.

"We help them early in the morning or even at midnight," Liu Jianchao, the ministry's spokesman, has said.

While Guo expressed confidence in the system's efficacy, he said there were still friction points – spokesmen who refused to answer journalists' questions, for instance.

In response, the SCIO came up with the "zero refusal" policy. It required ministries to designate people who would deal with

calls and interview requests from the foreign media and to give the requesting party a response within 24 hours or within the period promised, Guo said.

"It doesn't mean all requests will be approved, but we need to tell the media how we handled it so they can understand," he said.

Guo said the SCIO is also training press officers and certain officials, from the county to the provincial level on how to facilitate the work of foreign journalists.

"We hope all spokesmen will have good interactions with the foreign media," Guo said. "If their calls to local governments are unanswered, or are given a cold reception, they can complain to us."

White paper shows transparency

One of the SCIO's major tasks is to compile and publish white papers, which present to the international community the country's policies and positions on major issues.

Last year, the SCIO published white papers on four major issues: "China's Efforts and Achievements in Promoting the Rule of Law," "Status Quo of Drug Supervision in China," "China's Policies and Actions for Addressing Climate Change," and "Protection and Development of Tibetan Culture."

"These documents have not only clarified the Chinese government's policies and positions on major issues but have also made the government's work more transparent," Guo

said. Since 1991, the SCIO has published 59 white papers.

China is serious about showing openness to the foreign media, having realized that it will lead to more objective reports about the country, Guo said.

SCIO

The State Council Information Office is the government's main information office. It is administered by the State Council, the country's chief administrative body.

Through news releases, the SCIO provides media groups with information on economic and social developments and major emergencies.

Ministry of Culture

Attracting the world to China

Chinese State Ballet dancer in a scene from *The Red Lantern* at the Central Academic Theatre of the Russian Army, in Moscow.

CFP Photo

By Jin Zhu

Since 1999, China has done hundreds of cultural exchanges with other countries, reflecting its emphasis on "soft power" – influencing the interests of other countries through cultural means to maintain a favorable image overseas.

Official displays of Chinese culture

"Amazing, fascinating, unbelievable," said American teacher Janet McWhinney after watching a parade of traditional Chinese dress during China's Culture Exchange Tour in the US in 2000.

At the National Working Conference on Overseas Publicity the year before, then Chinese President Jiang Zemin gave a speech on the importance of international publicity. He said China should enhance its visibility overseas as a way of supporting the country's economic development.

Jiang's words have since become the guiding principle of China's international cultural campaign. In the past 10 years, the country has hosted a series of cultural exchanges, showcasing the country's colorful history, rich culture and tradition and recent achievements as a way to introduce the real China to the world.

These events are an effective way to consolidate China's strengths and exert influence, said Wu Qiang, a staff at the Ministry of Culture's Policy and Regulations Department.

Splendid shows overseas

The Chinese Culture Week in Paris in 1999, organized by the State Council Information Office and UNESCO, became the largest Chinese cultural exchange event held in Europe up to that point since New China's founding.

Four years later, Sino-French Culture Year took place – again in Paris – which featured more than 300 events on subjects such as ancient civilization, folklore, art and literature, education, technology, and tourism. At least 20 Chinese cities and provinces participated.

"In cultural exchanges, the most important consideration is the destination country's cultural background, so that appropriate aspects of Chinese culture are chosen to be shown," Wu said. "Although ancient Chinese culture is mysterious and exciting, it is necessary to focus on modern China so that foreigners will have a better understanding of the country."

The success of cultural exchanges also

depends on proper timing. "If the event is held much earlier than the next big international event in the country, its overall effect is diminished. If it is done much later, it becomes meaningless," Wu said.

The Chinese Culture Exchange Tour in the US in 2000 was timed perfectly – just a week before the UN Millennium Summit attended by more than 150 state leaders.

"Because of the cultural exchange, there was an increased interest in Chinese culture among the American public, which drew greater attention to Pres-

"China should enhance its visibility overseas as a way to support the country's economic development."

ident Jiang Zemin's visit. It has been regarded as a great model for future cultural exchanges," Wu said.

Another shining example was Show China, held in Argentina in December 2004. The event was orchestrated to coincide with President Hu Jintao's official visit to Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Cuba.

Nations with a strong economy, such as Brazil and Argentina, generally have a more mature cultural market. Art exhibitions and performances therefore have a bigger chance of becoming commercial successes. The Nanjing Acrobatic Troupe, for instance, has increased the number of its profit-generating shows in Argentina from 12 to 40.

So far, China has reached cultural agreements with 157 countries and signed 700 plans for annual cultural exchanges. Every year, the Ministry of Culture authorizes 2,000 cultural exchange projects with 60 to 70 countries involving a team of about 30,000 Chinese people.

Warm international response

For a long time, very few foreigners

knew the real China. One of the main aims of cultural exchanges is to present a realistic face of the country. Culture, through its emotional and psychological impact, has great power to change people's thoughts and opinions.

The Chinese Culture Exchange Tour in the US in 2000 visited almost all major cities, including New York, Washington, Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco, attracting a total audience of at least 100,000.

Top US media companies such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, Associated Press and Fox Broadcasting Company gave the tour a lot of coverage. During that period, reports on China appeared in the *Times* almost every day.

"Concentrated reporting on one foreign country within a certain period of time was not common in American news reporting," Wu said.

During the Sino-French Culture Year in 2003, a French opinion poll revealed that 68 percent of respondents had a favorable impression of China.

Wu Jianmin, the Chinese ambassador to France at the time, said getting on the French people's good side was not easy, since they are a people fond of argument and debate over the smallest things. It was the soft power of cultural exchanges that did the work.

Wu Qiang

Wu is a staff member at the Ministry of Culture's Policy and Regulations Department. His work focuses on researching China's previous policies on international cultural exchanges, especially for intergovernmental activities.

Ministry of Culture

The Ministry of Culture, the country's top cultural administrative body, is responsible for formulating China's cultural policies and lining up related activities. It also plays a leading role in organizing cultural exchanges with its foreign counterparts.

Benefits of Nongovernmental cultural exchanges

Gaining through sharing

By Zhang Dongya

Besides international cultural exchanges, nongovernmental cultural communication also plays an important role in polishing China's image.

In October 1955, when Chu Tunan, the first president of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, brought a classical opera group to Sweden, King Gustaf VI Adolf asked to meet one of the performers, Mei Baoyue, the daughter of Peking Opera great Mei Lanfang.

The two nations have since conducted numerous cultural exchanges, but the meeting between the king and Mei entered the annals of China's international cultural communication.

The friendship association, established in 1954, mainly organizes cultural exchanges. But its nongovernmental diplomatic work played a crucial role in maintaining China's links with ordinary foreign citizens and their governments – especially from the 50s through the mid-70s when diplomatic ties between China and many Western countries were weak or non-existent.

"The Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries is one of the earliest associations in the country to engage in people-to-people diplomatic activities," Chen Haosu, the association's president said during the group's semicentennial in 2004. "It has more than 50 years' experience in enhancing friendships, promoting international cooperation and maintaining world peace."

"Governmental diplomacy is the core of the country's diplomatic efforts, while people-to-people diplomacy is a reliable base and an effective catalyst," he said.

In the 70s, China's relationship with the rest of the world entered a new era: it went beyond political dialogues and entered cooperation in cultural and economic areas.

Chen, however, said there are still countries that misunderstand China and are hostile toward it. Some of them subscribe to the notion of the "China Threat," which has replaced the "China Backward" slogan of the past.

"We should establish more communication channels to help foreigners understand the real China, instead of adopting an attitude of withdrawal or resignation," he said.

The association's most outstanding achievement in the past decade is in economic cooperation. It has opened up channels for Chinese trade and business based on its friendly relations with other nations. It also holds international seminars to bring together Chinese and foreign entrepreneurs.

Chen said the most important aspect of international communication is the philosophy of sharing. "It is different from sharing one apple. Here, two people exchange the apple they each have, so each person still gets to keep one. But the exchange of ideas creates a third apple, an added value," he said.

The West eyes C

Michael Berry

Michael Berry is an associate professor of contemporary Chinese cultural studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He received his PhD in East Asian languages and cultures from Columbia University in 2004. His research interests include modern Chinese literature, Chinese cinema, cultural studies and translation.



By He Jianwei

Geographically speaking, China is a distant country, but its televisions, books and movies breaking down geopolitics is now but a neighbor.

From pages 8 to 15, Western researchers and journalists in the past six decades, touching on politics, economics, literature and movies.

Seeing China through directors' lenses

Bruce Lee might be kung fu's best ambassador, bridging the East and West through his movies, but he is not the only notable name in Chinese film history.

In the past six decades, Chinese filmmakers have experienced trials and tribulations, but through it all the industry steadily progressed and even flourished. Since the late 1970s and early 80s, the world has witnessed the rise of Chinese films. "They have become among the most influential films since that time," said Michael Berry, who was done extensive research since 2001 on Chinese filmmakers.

Berry believes Chinese films are not only watched by Western filmmakers and critics but also by ordinary people. "Jackie Chan, Chow Yun-Fat and Jet Li have become household names," he said.

China Film Museum celebrates the six decades of cinema from September 19.

CFP Photo



Art for workers, peasants and soldiers

Xie Jin (1923-2008) was an important film director who began his career in 1948. He experienced nearly six decades of cinematic innovation. Among Berry's interviewees, Xie was the only one filmmaker whose career spanned 60 years.

In the early-going, film production was guided by Chairman Mao's speech on literature and art in Yan'an in 1942. According to the speech, films must serve the interests of workers, peasants and soldiers.

From 1949 to 1966, film productions followed that guideline.

In 1961, Xie directed *The Red Detachment of Women*, whose heroine is a housemaid who leads a regiment of female soldiers against a cruel warlord.

Before the Cultural Revolution, China produced many "Red Films."

Since, such film productions have been at a standstill.

Reexamining history

In the early 1980s, Xie and his peers began to reexamine history. In the 1982 film *The Herdsman*,

Xie depicts the life of a herdsman in Western China from the 1950s through the Cultural Revolution, climaxing with his reunion with his father from the US.

His later film, *Hibiscus Town*, was regarded as an example of the "scar drama" genre that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s detailing life during the Cultural Revolution.

Beginning in the mid- to late-1980s, the rise of the so-called "Fifth Generation" of Chinese filmmakers brought increased popularity to Chinese cinema abroad. Most of them had graduated from the Beijing Film Academy in 1982, including Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige and Tian Zhuangzhuang.

In style and subject, the Fifth Generation directors' films ranged from black comedy, such as Huang Jianxin's *The Black Cannon Incident* (1985), to the esoteric, such as Chen's *Life on a String* (1991), but "they share a common rejection of

the socialist-realist tradition worked by earlier Chinese filmmakers," Berry said.

It was during this period that Chinese filmmakers began reaping the rewards of international attention,

The Sixth Generation uses a more individualistic, anti-romantic viewpoint.

including the 1988 Golden Bear for Zhang's *Red Sorghum*, the 1992 Golden Lion for Zhang's *The Story of Qiu Ju*, the 1993 Palme d'Or for Chen's *Farewell My Concubine* and three Best Foreign Language Film nominations from the

Academy Awards.

After their fame resounded around the film world, some of them began to make commercial films, exposing them to wider Western audiences.

Focusing on reality

Recently the movie industry has seen the return of the amateur filmmaker, around which time the Sixth Generation emerged. Sixth Generation directors' films are treated as underground films,

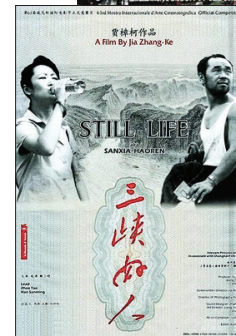
which are shot quickly and cheaply.

"Most of them create a documentary feel with long takes, hand-held cameras and ambient sound, which is more akin to Italian neo-realism," Berry said.

Unlike the Fifth Generation, the Sixth Generation uses a more individualistic, anti-romantic viewpoint and pays more attention to contemporary urban life. Some important directors include Wang Xiaoshuai, Zhang Yuan, Jia Zhangke and Li Yang.

"They eyed a group of people living the urban life – migrant workers, physically or mentally deficient people, prostitutes, drug abusers and homosexuals – to criticize and rethink reality," Berry said.

Li's *Blind Shaft* (2003), for example, is a chilling account of two murderous con men in the unregulated and dangerous mining industry of northern China, while Jia's *The World* (2004) emphasizes the emptiness of globalization amid the backdrop of an internationally themed amusement park.



Representative movies of each generation of directors

The Opium War (1997)

Directed by Xie Jin

The film was generally well received by Western critics as an example of a workable big-budget historical film. *Variety*, in one review, said it was "comparatively even-handed," while the film itself had excellent production value.

Red Sorghum (1987)

Directed by Zhang Yimou

The first Chinese film to receive a commercial release in the US, it won the prestigious Golden Bear at the 1988 Berlin Film Festival. Zhang's fable of Chinese life during the 1920s and 1930s, with its abundance of astonishingly sensual images, immediately established him as one of the world's most gifted directors.

Farewell My Concubine (1993)

Directed by Chen Kaige

Like other Fifth Generation films, the film explores the lives of individuals, families and groups during the middle of the 20th century – in this case, two stars in a Peking Opera troupe and the woman who comes between them.

Still Life (2006)

Directed by Jia Zhangke

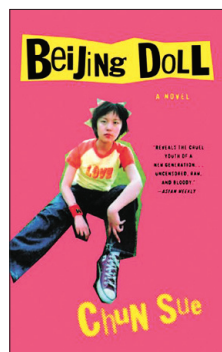
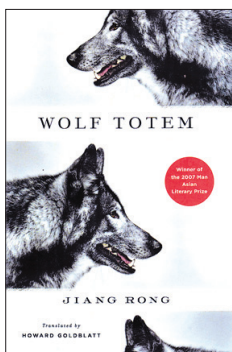
Manohla Dargis, critic for the

New York Times, noted that Jia's film "exists on a continuum with the modernist masters, among other influences, but that he is very much an artist of his own specific time and place." Other critics, like J. Holberman of *Village Voice*, also praised the film, consciously drawing contrasts with Fifth Generation director Zhang and his more recent big-budget epics.

China's changes

for Westerners. But in the digital age, with newspapers, al boundaries, a true global village has emerged. China

analysts talk about their impression of China's changes cs, diplomacy, culture, media, public opinion, modern



Modern literature, a new window

emporary literature is like a window into a country and its present culture.

Howard Goldblatt, an American translator, has translated more than 40 books from 25 writers in the ur decades. He is regarded as one who "makes modern Chinese literature wear the clothes of literature."

lecting on his work, Goldblatt said the readership for Chinese literature in the US is very small, but ill optimistic about its future.

Modern Chinese fiction has readers

ough he has translated more books, he never saw those displayed in a prominent place bookstores. Americans sometimes figure out the surname of Chi- thors, so in some bookstores he l, for instance, Su Tong's books next to Leo Tolstoy. Glodblatt d this as a great honor, because S, Russian and Latin literature is opular than East Asia's.

US publishers release three to ese novels every year. Most of e from university publishers. For e, the Columbia University Press lished a series of Chinese lit- But "the university publishers s money for advertisement, so ks don't generate great demand," tt said.

Goldblatt's eyes, *Life and Death aring Me Out* (552pp, Arcade ing, \$29.95) is Mo Yan's best lthough the *New York Times* d a big book review last year, it help the book's sales.

ublisher's boss passed away nths after the book's publication. d me he was glad to see the book but the sales of the book didn't ood result. Maybe one reason is a hardcover and the price is too most readers," Goldblatt said. second reason is that the book thick. "Most American readers o books. For example, *The Moon* by Bi Feiyu, 128pp, Houghton (Harcourt, \$18.00) is a short d just over 100 pages, so Ameri- ll buy it," Goldblatt said.

History and politics k and chick lit

Goldblatt studied Chinese in Taipei 60s. He wrote his dissertation heastern writers in Manchukuo 45), which no one else had done "I sort of discovered Xiao Hong ere in the States, and even for

people in China," he said.

Goldblatt has translated many modern and contemporary writers. A lot of his work is historical fiction – China's literature and history are inseparable, he said.

In the early 1980s, Grove Press called on him to translate a novel by Zhang Jie. "That book (*Heavy Wings*, 308pp, Grove Press, \$19.95) did reasonably well, so I decided that this was what I wanted to do," he said.

Heavy Wings, praised as "China's first political novel," takes the modernization of China's economy as its central theme.

In the US, there are two kinds of Chinese novels that are popular – fiction related to politics and fiction related to sex.

"I think that's what the generation of writers that I've been working with the most do best in Chinese literature," Goldblatt said. Writers like Su, Mo, Li Rui and Li Yongping "tend to be anti-historians, in terms of their view of China," he said.

Goldblatt has translated eight books written by Mo, but he said only *Red Sorghum* (368pp, Penguin, \$16.00) sold well.

In the US, there are two kinds of Chinese novels that are popular – fiction related to politics and fiction related to sex. Chick lit authors such as Mian Mian, Wei Hui and Chun Sue are relatively popular.

Published in 2000 and written when the author was between the ages of 14 and 17, *Beijing Doll* (240pp, Riverhead Trade, \$17.00) is Chun's confessional and foray into China's disillusioned teenage subculture.

Although Goldblatt has also translated the younger generation's literature, he said many young Chinese novelists do not deal well with contemporary values. He said many writers try to represent a new cultural milieu and borrow it from the West.

"I don't think the youngsters read enough," he said. "The older generation read a lot but didn't spend enough time on the craft, although some did. The young kids now don't read enough. They're too busy living, having a good time."

Efforts to gain acceptance among American readers

Chinese literature will not gain influence unless it is accepted by the English-speaking world. Language is the biggest barrier.

"The translator's primary obligation is to the readers, not the writers. I realize that a lot of people don't agree, especially the writers. But I do think that we need to produce something that can be readily accepted by an American readership," Goldblatt said.

He believes there are some great works among modern literature in China, but there are few good translators who can make it accepted by English speakers.

When he translated *The Moon Opera*, there was one example of cultural confusion. In the story, the husband says to his wife, "If we don't have a daughter, you are my daughter." Goldblatt's editor asked him to take out this sentence, because some readers might consider the "daughter" reference incestuous.

But the writer insisted on keeping it. So Goldblatt added: "The husband said an absurd sentence to his wife."

Goldblatt also believes if there are more science fiction or detective stories written by Chinese authors, there will be more American readers. "Qiu Xiaolong's books have many readers," he said. "Although he lived in Missouri, he uses Beijing as a background in his detective stories."

Howard Goldblatt

Howard Goldblatt is a professor of Chinese at Notre Dame University in the US. He has taught modern Chinese literature and culture for more than a quarter of a century and is the West's foremost translator of modern and contemporary Chinese literature.

Some books translated by Howard Goldblatt

Wolf Totem

By Jiang Rong, 544pp, Penguin

Press, \$26.95

An epic tale in the vein of *The Last Emperor*, *Wolf Totem* depicts the dying culture of Mongolians – descendants of the Mongol hordes who conquered most of the known world – and the parallel extinction of an animal they held as sacred: the fierce and otherworldly Mongolian wolf.

Rice

By Su Tong, 288pp, Harper Perennial, \$12.95

Set in famine-stricken 1930s China, *Rice* chronicles the complete debasement of an urban family after it takes in a young man named Five Dragons, a starving wanderer from the

provinces whose desire for power and sex is insatiable.

Red Sorghum: A Novel of China

By Mo Yan, 368pp, Penguin,

\$16.00

This four-chapter novel spans 40 years in rural China through flashbacks and foreshadowing, beginning with the Japanese invasion in the 1930s.

Beijing Doll

By Chun Sue, 240pp, Riverhead Trade, \$17.00

This cutting-edge novel – drawn from the diaries the author kept throughout her teenage years – takes readers to the streets of Beijing, where a disaffected generation spurns tradition for lives of self-expression, passion and rock 'n' roll.



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Being a responsible country in global politics

By He Jianwei

On October 25, 1971, the People's Republic of China gained entry into the United Nations and a seat in the United Nations Security Council. Due to China's diplomatic policy in the 1980s and 1990s, it played a fairly reserved role in dealing with global disputes.

That slowly began to change as the country developed. When North Korea withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003, China played an important role in a series of six-party talks. "It shows China has begun to participate in global politics," said Francesco Sisci, Asia editor of the Italian newspaper *La Stampa*.

Francesco Sisci

Francesco Sisci studied Chinese and culture in Beijing in 1988 and became a journalist for ANSA Agency in 1994. He currently works as the Asia editor of *La Stampa*, one of the best known, most influential and widely sold Italian daily newspapers.

Beginning – six-party talks

While North Korea declared on April 14 it would pull out of six-party talks and resume its nuclear enrichment program, six-party talks will remain a keystone of China's diplomatic and political policy.

From 2003 to 2007, six countries engaged in six rounds of talks aimed at finding a peaceful resolution to security concerns about North Korea's nuclear weapons program. The



Senior diplomats from six countries at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing before their talks in 2004.

CFP Photos

announced the role China played in the negotiations. China put out a general goal, direction and procedure for peacefully solving the issues, which were agreed upon by the other participants and the international community.

However, China does not have the last say on this issue, and the country has always been aware of this. It has, nonetheless, managed to balance its position and role.

"China has realized that its domestic interests conform to



The third round of six-party talks in 2004.

financial crisis made China realize that "to maintain the stability and prosperity of its domestic market, China had to participate in global issues," Sisci said.

The financial crisis gripped much of Asia beginning in July 1997 and raised fears of a worldwide economic meltdown.

The crisis started in Thailand with the collapse of the Thai baht, caused by the Thai government's decision to float the baht, cutting its peg to the US dollar, after exhaustive efforts to support it in the face of a severe financial over-extension that was in part driven by the real-estate market.

As the crisis spread, most of Southeast Asia and Japan saw slumping currencies, devalued stock markets and other asset prices, and a precipitous rise in private debt.

In an article titled, "The Politics of Chinese Recovery," written this August, Sisci wrote, "Hong Kong asset prices had been tumbling out of fear for the July 1 return to the Chinese motherland. If Soros had man-

aged to take over mighty England, then Hong Kong – the tiny former colony returned to China – should have been a piece of cake. The primitive Chinese financial systems would be no match for the sophisticated instruments wielded by the financiers."

"In fact, Soros was wrong," Sisci said. "Because it was more primitive, shrouded in layers of bureaucratic regulations, China's behavior did not match Soros' overly sophisticated analysis. It was the old story of asymmetric strategy: China refused to fight the war Soros had in mind; it fought its own war on its own turf and predictably won."

The yuan's non-convertibility protected its value from currency speculators, and the decision was made to maintain the peg of the currency, thereby improving the country's standing within Asia.

"Although China didn't have any intention to save the other countries in Asia, the result showed that it saved Southeast Asia, Japan and South Korea in

the crisis in 1997," Sisci said. "China's interest was also Asia's interest during the crisis."

Future – Iran and Afghanistan

China has become one of the largest exporters in the world. "To protect its own interests, China must maintain the stability and prosperity of the international community," Sisci said. "The chaos or poverty in other countries will damage China's interests."

Besides the Korea peninsula, China must consider how to deal with Iran and Afghanistan, he said.

On June 18, the Chinese government expressed its wish for peace soon to be restored in Tehran and encouraged the US not to be tempted to push a new "color" revolution in Iran.

"China is extremely concerned about the political stability along its borders because it is the one thing that could undermine the domestic stability necessary to carry on its reform and modernization program. Chaos in Iran then looks particularly dangerous," Sisci wrote in an article titled, "China Makes Choice in Iran."

He said Europe does not exist anymore in terms of politics and present-day China is the only country that can play a significant role in global political issues.

"The world, already in the middle of a grave economic crisis, can hardly spare the time and energy to cope with the expansion of the present geopolitical crisis, which already stretches from Iraq to Pakistan," Sisci wrote. "This favors China's interest in the status quo."

China delivered the message to the international community that it would be responsible for finding a balanced solution.

participants were China, South Korea, North Korea, the US, Russia and Japan.

"China played an unprecedented active role in the six-party talks – the beginning of its participation in international negotiations of political issues since 1949," Sisci said.

Before the talks, Sisci said China had a vague attitude toward international disputes. "We were not concerned about China's policies in global politics," he said.

In the 1980s and 90s, China put more effort into economic development. When the Korean crisis happened, China had an idea on how to resolve the issue – persuade the US and other parties to sit down and agree on a milder, step-by-step solution.

In June 2004, a senior Chinese diplomat and chairman of the third round of six-party talks

international interests," Sisci said. China delivered the message to the international community that it would be responsible for finding a balanced solution that could benefit all the parties.

During the sixth round of talks in 2007, Sisci wrote an article titled, "A North Korean Crossroads for Asian Politics." Sisci wrote, "Pyongyang is the meeting point for the US and China, as diplomacy may pay more than warfare. The real linchpin of the Korea peace process is not Pyongyang but Beijing, he said. China has been a driving force in the talks, the one that has managed to bring North Korea to reason and will also be the keystone of the future East Asian regional architecture."

Turning point – Asian financial crisis in 1997

Six years before the first round of six-party talks, the Asian

Economy from closed to open, provincial to global

By Han Manman and He Jianwei

"China is like an ongoing story. It is a story of development and change, and no one knows where the story will go," said Johnny Erling, a reporter with the German newspaper *Die Welt*.

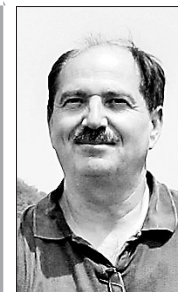
The past six decades have witnessed the development of China's economy from closed to open, poor to prosperous.

Johnny Erling

After studying at Peking University in the 1970s, Johnny Erling became a journalist for *Frankfurter Rundschau*. He has been working for *Die Welt* since 1994.

Melinda Liu

Melinda Liu, *Newsweek* Beijing bureau chief, came to China in 1980, the same year established its Beijing bureau.



Full speed ahead in the 1980s and 90s

Before initiating economic reforms in the 1980s, China was a command economy – an economic system in which the central government makes all the decisions on the production and consumption of goods and services.

"There were about 20 German overseas students and people were friendly, but the purchase of commodities was strictly controlled by the government," said Erling, a student in Beijing in the 1970s.

At the beginning of the next decade, "I felt the atmosphere of economic reform," he said. The bold idea of Deng Xiaoping to use the border town of Shenzhen (then Bao'an County) as an experimental special economic zone – the country's first export-oriented area – was taken as a joke by many Western journalists who were invited in 1980 to visit the place that is now Luohu District. Erling and Melinda Liu, *Newsweek* Beijing bureau chief, were among the invitees.

"Shenzhen had been a tiny fishing village, home to only 17 families," Liu wrote last year in the article, "Mao to Now, a 30-Year Journey." "Western journalists with me that day looked askance at the patch of mud that was supposed to be China's future. Many thought the idea was a joke."

Erling remembers he saw some people made cell phones on the second floor of the hotel. "They looked quite busy and talked about their future business. It was the first time that I felt the urgency in Chinese people's life," he said.

"China in the 1980s was a place of excitement and possibility. Everyone there was looking for angles, opportunities, connections, especially Chinese entrepreneurs from Hong Kong and Taiwan," Liu wrote. "Investors kept pouring in from Hong Kong and Taiwan, to build factories and take advantage of cheap migrant labor from the hinterlands. In 1992 the 'Paramount Leader' made a whistle-stop tour of Shenzhen and other economic zones to advertise the boom at home and in the world's financial capitals. His unspoken message: forget the past and concentrate on the future. As he

China's entering the WTO totally changed its economic relations with other countries. It was a new era of 'going-out.'

Entering the WTO was a strategic decision made by the Chinese government for economic globalization, marking a new stage in China's opening-up.

"China's entering the WTO totally changed its economic relations with other countries," Erling said. "It was a new era of 'going-out.' China had five years to transition its economy to suit the regulations in the WTO."

China began to revise and



Shenzhen has witnessed rapid development in the past three decades.

CFP Photos

said, "To get rich is glorious." **Integration with the world's economy**

China exported more and more products to other countries after its economic reform, but it still stood outside the world's economic regulations.

After 15 years of arduous effort, the protocol on China's WTO entry was approved and adopted at the Fourth WTO Ministerial Meeting held in Doha, capital of Qatar, by representatives from 142 members on November 10, 2001.

improve laws and administrative regulations involving foreign trade and economic cooperation in 1999. Laws and regulations not in conformity with WTO regulations were revised or nullified. By the end of 2001, relevant

Together with laws on Chinese-foreign cooperative ventures, foreign-funded enterprises and patents, China had revised six laws by 2000 as a result of WTO entry.

Considering the timetable in the transition period, Erling

Slow-down after the transition period

After the transition period, Erling said China slowed down the opening of its market. "Without a timetable, the government slowed down the steps of reform," he said.

After a long stretch of rapid development, the government found problems of imbalance – some enterprises went bankrupt, there was drastic inflation and a widening gap between the rich and poor.

"Maybe the leaders realized the problems, but the reform plans for banks, currency and detailed regulations about joint ventures were not clear," Erling said.

However, he believes history clearly shows that reform is China's best hope for a prosperous future and that the government will keep the stability of free trade.

"Equal and sound competition is critical for both China and other countries," Erling said.

The Chinese currency plays an important role in trade between China and its neighbors. As of last year, China had signed settlement agreements with eight neighboring countries, including Russia, Mongolia, Vietnam and Myanmar.



China finished negotiations for entering the WTO in 1999.

departments of the State Council had revised 2,300 related laws and regulations, and a list of 221 administrative regulations annulled by the State Council had been published. In 2001, the National People's Congress (NPC) revised laws on copyright, trademarks and joint ventures with Chinese and foreign investment.

said the Chinese government's implementation went quite well. Many Chinese enterprises began showing transparency to the Western media.

"When I do reports about the enterprises' cooperation between Germany and China, I can easily get the information from both sides," Erling said.

Practical strategies help China's image

By Annie Wei

Chinese diplomatic strategies have become more pragmatic since 2000. Instead of showing the world its military muscle, China improved its image by showcasing its economy.

With 15 years' experience covering major social and political issues in China, Benjamin Lim, Reuters' Beijing bureau chief and chief political correspondent of Greater China, started reporting from China in 1994.

Benjamin Lim

Benjamin Lim, Reuters' Beijing bureau chief and chief political correspondent of Greater China, started reporting from China in 1994.

Diplomatically isolated in the 1990s

Lim's blog says that after China's "Paramount Leader" Deng Xiaoping met US President Jimmy Carter in Washington in 1979, the Sino-China relationship entered its honeymoon phase – "American investors, tourists and students flocked to China. Western and Japanese aid and loans flowed in, while trade and investment mushroomed, helping to transform the world's most populous nation from an economic backwater into an export powerhouse and the world's third-biggest economy," Lim wrote.

However, when China was diplomatically isolated in the 1990s, the international media focused their China coverage mainly on human rights.

Lim said when he was in China in 1994, Reuters' audience was not interested in other stories, and there were not many other kinds for them to report.

"There was no pollution, all factories were state-owned and trade with China did not matter," Lim said.

Important events like Deng visiting South China in 1992 and the mil-

itary exercise in 1994 were not top stories but trends and threads.

Reuters kept covering China's major stories, including Deng's death in 1997, Jiang Zemin's visit to the US in 1997 and Bill Clinton's visit to China in 1998.

Generally speaking, international media outlets in China did not change their angles very much during the 1990s, Lim said.

Instead of flexing its military muscle, China improved its image to the world by showcasing its economic strength and soft power.

From military power to soft power

Before foreign correspondents began talking about China's emerging middle class, the luxury market and energy issues, they focused their attention on Chinese threats.

Lim said everyone knew that China was a country with 1.3 billion people and that any of its moves, like a military exercise or imprisonment of an expat reporter, would arouse international

curiosity, concern and questions.

But after 2000, the Chinese government's diplomatic strategies became more practical.

Lim said there were some positive results, like promoting Confucius Institute all over the world, the Buddhist Forum of the General Assembly and the idea of a harmonious society.

Around 2004, the reporting angle changed from mainly political issues to more about economic development. Lim said he remembers the year Reuters interviewed Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, who said the government was taking macro-control measures; on the same day, the international stock market dropped.

"The Chinese government mentioned macro-control quite a few times before, but the world did not care because China was not a player," Lim said.

But when China said that it would import less oil, copper and gold in 2004, the global market was affected. It was a clear sign that China was not only getting stronger, but more important.

"From 2003 and 2004, whenever China's chairman and prime minister visited abroad, we would send reporters to cover the stories," Lim said, "because we think China is one of the G8 countries and an important country to the world economy."



The Confucius Institute in Russia was founded in 2007.

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China's soft power still has room for growth

By Han Manman

China's economic and military prowess – its “hard” power – has grown rapidly within the past three decades, but the country's soft power – that is, its culture – having only taken root in the 1990s, still lags far behind.

As an American photographer in China for dozens of years, Liu Heung Shing has witnessed the country's efforts to build up its soft power step by step.

Liu Heung Shing

Liu Heung Shing, former vice president of News Corporation China, once worked as a photographer for *Time* and the Associated Press in China. He is a Pulitzer Prize winner for his coverage of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992.

In 2008, Liu helped publish *China: Portrait of a Country*. This huge book of photographs, taken by 88 Chinese photographers, gives a visual history of the country from 1949 to the present and has been hailed by many as one of the best books on “New China” ever published.



Before 1990s: soft power practically nonexistent

Liu first came to China in 1966, when the Cultural Revolution had just begun. The experience impressed him.

During his stay in Guangzhou, Liu went into a barbershop one day and sat in a seat, waiting for the barber to cut his hair. The barber suddenly shouted to him, “Stand up! Turn to me!” Liu was caught off guard. The barber asked Liu to follow him in a loud reading of Chairman Mao's *Little Red Book*. Only after finishing did he cut Liu's hair.

A few days later, Liu went to one of Guangzhou's few local restaurants. “The inside was dark, waiters threw chopsticks on the table and some people stared at me, intimating I must eat quickly as they wanted to eat next,” Liu recalled.

As a photographer, Liu paid great attention to both verbal and nonverbal communication.

“The whole country at that time had no ability to build up their soft power,” he said.

In 1976, when Mao Zedong died, Liu went to Guangzhou again to follow up on the news. It was then that he became keenly aware of the country's changes.

Many citizens performed shadowboxing down on the Zhujiang River. No one cared when Liu took photos of them.

“When I saw this, I had a strong feeling that China would have a new start,” Liu said.

After this second trip, Liu decided to return to China again to record the new age of China.

Getting ready for Sino-US normalization, Liu came to China in 1978 as *Time*'s first China photographer.

In post-Mao China, Deng Xiaoping urged his one billion countrymen to “seek truth from facts.” Taking its cue from Deng's overture, China started rapid economic development. From that time on, Liu began to witness China build up its soft power.

1990s: build-up of soft power

It was only during the 90s that the Chinese government began to become aware of the necessity of building up its soft power, especially in 1999, Liu said.

At that time, Liu was still working for Time Warner Inc. Knowing that 1999 was the 50th anniversary of the People's Republic of China's founding, Liu suggested the annual fortune global forum be held in China.

“New China in 1999 had a half-century of history,” Liu said. “I hoped top global entrepreneurs could come

to China and see the result of China's opening-up policy.”

Liu only worried about the Chinese government's attitude toward the event.

“The central government thought our idea was very good and gave us full support to hold that forum,” Liu said, adding that after the forum, many international summits turned their eyes to China.

According to media reports, the 1999 forum attracted 58 Fortune 500 companies and 300 presidents and CEOs from multinational companies. About 300 overseas journalists covered it. A total of 40 subjects were discussed at the forum's sessions, covering both global issues and China-specific topics.

Liu said the 1999 forum was the best forum they ever held. The reason for the success was largely because the Chinese government's attitude toward the West had changed. From that forum, many Fortune 500 companies also noticed the positive effects years of reform had on China.

Changing attitudes had a profound effect on Sino-US relations that year.

Chinese and American cultural exchange in fact started in 1979, when the two countries reestablished foreign relations. However, the effect back then was far from satisfactory. Few Americans even knew China had organized a cultural exchange, with performers touring the States.

Liu said the Chinese government did not know how to promote its culture in America at that time and Chinese performers only performed in front of Chinese audiences.

“China should have hired a top American PR company to introduce, promote and build up its ‘culture year’ concept in American society and not only targeted Chinese-Americans,” Liu said to Zhao Qizheng, then-director of the Information Office of China's State Council, often called by Western media “a renowned China image polisher.”

Zhao adopted Liu's suggestion and found a top PR company in the US to help the government promote the event in the early 2000s. Huge posters introduced China's culture year on subways, bus stations and many other public areas, Liu said.

Present day: still far from mature

The country's economic and military achievements within the last 30 years are equal to 90 years of American and 200 years of British achievements, Liu said.

However, the culture industry



1981, a student at the Dalian Institute of Technology skates past a statue of Chairman Mao Zedong. Western media used this image to symbolize the dawn of a new era in China. Photo by Liu Heung Shing

lags far behind. China does not have cultural industries like Hollywood and its media is far from that of America's or other developed countries.

There are some historical reasons. The West's soft power was built on a long-standing economic base, but China's economy has only recently taken shape. The two sides did not have the same starting line.

China has a way to go, Liu said.

“A mature culture industry must operate within an open media platform, but China is far from achieving that,” Liu said, adding the country does not have a mature and avant-garde media.

That is also a topic for Rupert Murdoch, media tycoon and owner of US News Corp group, who gave a speech in Beijing's elite Central Party School in 2003.

In that speech, Murdoch sug-

gested that opening up China's media to encourage business innovation and growth need not result in a loss of political control.

“The unleashing of the potential of the open market does not represent any loss of power,” he said. “As the party goes from running the country's media business to overseeing its growth, both China's leaders and her people will be greatly empowered by the rewards.”

Liu fully agrees with Murdoch's idea. He said China's media needs reform. According to him, if the media publishes a sensitive report or makes a mistake, the president and chief editor should not be dismissed – the media needs more autonomy than that.

“The future of the media should not be a group of media leaders trying not to make mistakes,” Liu said.

He understands government

control of the media is to ensure social stability and unity.

Liu said the country should have some private newspapers and the government should lend them support. Without the government's

“But without an open and diversified media, Westerners will never trust your voice. They will still choose to read their countries' newspapers and only listen to voices like ‘China Threat Theory.’”

support, private newspapers will find it hard to attract investment.

“A mature culture industry should be based on a diversified, open and internationalized media,” Liu said.

Negative reports based on different cultural background

After years of living in China, Liu is able to think about issues from both Western and Chinese angles. He said the reason for many Western media organizations' negative reports is because of cultural differences.

When last year's riots in Tibet happened, local residents were not the only ones hurt; so was the public trust of Western media. The biased news reports from Western media angered many Chinese people around the world, causing them to protest in the streets, while others created Web sites to counter misreporting by the Western media.

“I don't think Western journalists are deliberately writing negative reports about China, but they misunderstand some things,” Liu said.

He said China has a long tradition of reporting positive angles.

In past years, when a big problem happened, the Chinese government only brushed over the issue with some simple sayings, Liu said. Because of that, the West thinks the Chinese government must always be “hiding something from me.”

But China did quite well with July's Xinjiang riots, inviting Western reporters to come see the city themselves. That is an improvement.

“The government should become more confident,” Liu said. “When you put your difficulties and challenges on the table and admit the problems you face, Westerners will admire you more when you do find a solution.”



Spokesperson system shows great improvement

Anthony Kuhn

China correspondent Anthony Kuhn of Washington-based National Public Radio (NPR) first came to China in 1982 and became NPR's China correspondent in the early 2000s. His reports on China mainly focus on culture.

By Han Manman

Over the past 10 years, National Public Radio correspondent Anthony Kuhn has overseen improvements in the way the Chinese government handles public relations.

"Compared to the longstanding practice of 'managing the media,' governments at various levels are preparing to serve," Kuhn said. "Some of spokespersons have also become journalists' friends."

Great improvements in PR

In 1983, China established the spokesperson system, spearheaded by Foreign Ministry spokespersons, which opened an important channel for the public to receive information. However, early spokespersons only gave foreign journalists a view that was "alienated and reserved."

"At that time, access to government officials had always been a problem," Kuhn said. "We didn't know who they were. We didn't know where to find them, we didn't have any way of contacting them."

But as Kuhn sees it, change came in 1996 when Shen Guofang took office.

"Shen was very helpful to all foreign journalists. He provided his phone numbers, made himself available, spent time aside from press conferences to get to know the foreign journalists and talk about



In Kuhn's view, spokespersons' attitudes changed starting with Shen Guofang in 1996.

what ways we need their help, told them not to say 'no comment' and don't use the tone of a trainer when speaking with foreign journalists," he said.

Kuhn also gave suggestions for improving government press conferences.

He said current press conferences take too long – they should

"Instead of complaining about how little foreigners understand China, China has to be more patient in explaining itself instead of always claiming, 'You can't understand China, you never understand China.' That's the direction China is moving in now."

current events," Kuhn said. "Foreign journalists all like that."

Liu Jianchao, who became spokesman in 2002, also impressed Kuhn. His first appearance with the media on June 4 was like a soccer press conference, which was fitting because the World Cup was then being played. Many foreign journalists later viewed this as the easiest and most interesting news conference they had attended.

"Liu was not only very sociable and agreeable to talk with, but in terms of news, he did a good job of understanding what we wanted to learn," Kuhn said. "Sometimes he needed to obey the rules, but he still tried to give us much of the information we wanted."

"I had very good relations with several spokespersons during my years in China. They gave me their cell phones, we would have lunch together like friends," Kuhn said. "Some of them have even been to my country to visit NPR headquarters in Washington."

In Kuhn's view, China became aware of the importance of seizing the initiative after the SARS incident in 2004. The government invited him and other foreign journalists to training programs for government spokespersons in Beijing and Qingdao.

"I told them how we work, in

last not more than an hour. It is also a waste of time for the spokesperson to read a long opening statement.

"The government now has the ability to provide simultaneous translations, they have good translators and little earphones – there is no reason to use half the time translating statements into English," Kuhn said. "We would rather have simultaneous interpretation and double the amount of time for questions. We could read the statements ourselves. We just need Q&A."

Objective view of foreign media

Kuhn believes the Chinese government should learn to objectively assess foreign journalists' stories.

"Foreign media has many problems and preconceptions in its China reporting. Sometimes their reporting is not helpful in providing an objective view of China," Kuhn said.

Kuhn said the Chinese should have a new understanding of what foreign media is and the role of foreign media.

"I always encourage people to look at foreign media and its reports in new light," he said. "Don't just divide them into negative or positive."

In Kuhn's view, no story can be identified as entirely negative or



Western journalists hope the Chinese government can make press statement shorter to leave more time for their questions. CFP Photos

positive. For example, a report may be negative for the government's public image, but it may be positive in terms of people understanding a law or saving money.

He said to label media as

"friendly" or "unfriendly" is also a mistake. For many Chinese, if they like a report, they feel the reporter and the media is friendly, but if they don't like it, they think the media is unfriendly. But that's not

how the media works, Kuhn said.

"Articles can be critical, but that doesn't mean it's unfriendly, and it doesn't mean we want to hurt anyone's feelings," he said. "We just want to talk about issues."

After 10 years in China, Kuhn sometimes still feels the interviewing process is hard.

"When I was in Urumchi, some people were really emotional because they thought foreign reporters were not being fair in reporting about China," Kuhn said. "I remember one old man said, 'We can't have a conversation because you must attack me in your report.' I said, 'I have no interest in attacking you. I just want to communicate and to understand the facts.' Still, they don't always trust me."

Kuhn also remembers how once, when giving a newly arrived colleague a tour through Beijing's hutong, an old lady recognized him as a journalist and forbade her neighbor to speak to them. "Don't talk to them, they try to dig into the seamy side of our life," the woman shouted to her neighbor," Kuhn said.

He said most large media companies speak about China with more than one voice. Usually they have many correspondents on the ground.

"It's inadvisable that a newspaper have a unified point of view about China," he said. "I also disagree very much with some of the other correspondents within my own organization who write about China."

Kuhn said the Chinese people read very few Western media reports, though they should familiarize themselves with what the West is saying.

"2008 was a very important year in this aspect. China was in the world spotlight as it had never been before and it was not so comfortable," Kuhn said. "All these journalists put their big notes on every part of the city, asking unpleasant questions. It was difficult, but the Chinese began getting used to them."

Kuhn added that he hopes the foreign media can learn from their mistakes last year, be careful about what they write and devote more resources to reporting about China.

"The government is more mature when facing negative reports nowadays," Kuhn said. "Instead of complaining about how little foreigners understand China, China has to be more patient in explaining itself instead of always claiming, 'You can't understand China, you never understand China.' I think that's the direction China is moving in now."

An interesting and competitive China in young Italians' eyes

By Annie Wei

"Curiosity, because of course China can be seen as a source of new chances for business... Fear, especially because certain aspects of Italian business lack competition in comparison to China," said Antonio Talia, a reporter for *Agenzia Giornalistica Italia* (Italian Journalist Agency, or AGI). He talked to *Beijing Today* about what the younger Italian generation thinks of China.

An electronic mall calls on supporting Shanzhai factories to have their own brands with their own intellectual property.

CFP Photo



Antonio Talia

Antonio Talia is a reporter from *Agenzia Giornalistica Italia* (AGI) who has been reporting in China for four years. His first report on China was from Shanghai in 2005. Talia's China stories mainly focus on economics.

Before coming to China, Talia said he had no special impression about the country. But there was a very famous book about China called *Il Secolo Cinese* (The Chinese Century), written by one of the best-known Italian journalists, Federico Rampini. (Rampini is a former correspondent in Beijing for the Italian newspaper *Repubblica* and now lives in New York.)

Talia said the book had a great influence on China's image among Italians, not just young people but among the most cultivated. It helped shape the image of China as a booming country filled with opportunities but also laden with potential landmines.

China image: curiosity and concern

When asked what young Italians think of China, Talia said it depends on which kind of young Italians. Less educated

people tend to shape their opinions on what they see on TV, and of course TV offers a too simplistic view. "For these people, China is a huge world, full of strange and mysterious things they can't really understand because it's too far from their everyday lives, even if the Olympic

"More than criticized, I think Chinese people don't like to be patronized, which is something a lot of Westerners do."

— Talia

Games helped a bit," Talia said.

The kind of stories they like to read about China are weird stories, such as about pandas and exotic foods.

On the other hand, Talia said, young,

well-educated people approach China with curiosity and fear.

"Curiosity, because of course China can be seen as a source of new chances for business and the opening of the country is extremely interesting from a cultural point of view," Talia said. "Fear, especially because certain aspects of Italian business lack competition in comparison to China."

Both modern and traditional young Chinese

Talia said when he interviews a Chinese person, he would make an effort to understand his or her way of thinking, which could be different from the Italian or Western way.

"But I think a good reporter must do this job in every country," Talia said.

He said as long as a reporter tries to be objective, without falling in love or being overly critical with the subjects he covers, this is the right approach. "I can maintain my own culture, a very old one, without feeling dwarfed or disappointed by other old cultures such as the Chinese."

Talia said that young Chinese people are extremely interesting because their point of view can be surprising and seem both modern and traditional.

Antonio Talia's recent reports on China:

"Internationalization of Renminbi": As the global financial crisis spreads, the People's Bank of China and the Chinese government proposed to substitute the US dollar with SDRs (Special Drawing Rights) as the main international currency. Italy's Finance Minister called the Chinese proposal "interesting" during the G20 in London, and all major Italian media outlets covered this story.

"Luxury in China": The preference of China's nouveau riche can be slightly different from that of Europeans. "I found it interesting trying to discover these differences through a series of interviews with trendsetters, experts and simple buyers, both Chinese and Europeans," Talia said.

Shanzhai culture: The idea of *shanzhai* (grass-root) has a certain appeal to Italian readers, as it's filled with creativity (which Italian people love) and a vein of bizarre humor. But there's a negative side: if shanzhai can be creative, and in some cases it may even spark new investments or the creation of new products, sometimes it's filled with infringements on intellectual property as well.

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60 years of history through foreign lenses

By Wang Yu

After six decades of ups and downs, the PRC has grown out of its isolated homeland and onto the world's main stage. Throughout this time, China's development has been steadily recorded by photographers from abroad, who have made a photo album of the country's history.



Photo by Marc Riboud

1949-1959 Birth

Beijing in 1956, seven years after the founding of the People's Republic of China. The country was just beginning to recover from a series of devastating wars in the last century. Its reputation abroad was that of a rebel, and it had to struggle to survive. Chinese citizens, however, welcomed the relative peace and freedom from foreign domination.



Photo provided by Getty Images/CFP

1959-1969 Fervor

Members of the Red Guards, a youth paramilitary group, clutch the book of Mao Zedong's quotations which is also referred to as the "little red book" while cheering the Communist Party chairman at a meeting in Tiananmen Square to celebrate the launch of the Cultural Revolution on August 18, 1966.

The revolution, which took place from 1966 to 76, was launched to renew the spirit of the Chinese revolution and to reverse the historic processes underway. In hindsight, the campaign turned out to be detrimental to the young republic.



Photo by Frank Fischbeck/
Time Life Pictures/Getty Images

1969-1979 Reconnection

US table tennis player Glenn Cowan, surrounded by a crowd in Beijing. In April 1971, the US national table tennis team, accompanied by journalists, became the first US citizens to set foot in Beijing since the Communist Party came to power in 1949 in an event now referred to as Ping-Pong Diplomacy.

"Here was an Asian nation that owed nothing to anybody, and in consequence one looked them in the eye and they looked you right back," wrote John Saar, *Life* magazine's Hong Kong bureau chief. "They seemed very content within themselves, content with their lot and sure of themselves, knowing where they are going."



Photo by Liu Heung Shing

1979-1989 Reform

A Chinese youngster brandishes a bottle of Coca-Cola in the Forbidden City, Beijing, 1981. Ever since Party leader Deng Xiaoping instituted economic reforms in late 1978, the country had been riding an economic boom, attracting numerous huge foreign investors. Coca-Cola, which was first sold in China in the 1920s, opened its first plant in the capital in 1980. This decade also marked the beginning of China's adoption of foreign cultural influences and the birth of the country's pop culture.



Photo by Julian Finney/Getty Images/CFP

1999-2009 Spotlight

Gymnast Li Ning lights the Olympic flame during the Opening Ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics at the National Stadium on August 8. The athletic extravaganza, in which Chinese athletes won the most gold medals, marked the fulfillment of New China's dream – to return to the global center stage.



Photo by Forrest Anderson/
Time Life Pictures/Getty Images/CFP

1989-1999 Boom

Shenzhen Gintian Industry CEO Huang Hanqing inspects a crystal ball. As the country's first and one of its most successful special economic zones, Shenzhen was held up as a success story of China's economic liberalization policy. In the 1990s, the country also made huge strides in international politics and cultural communication.